

One Week by LeftHandOfSnarkness

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: After season one, F/M, Steve is a good guy, This relationship isn't going to work, exactly 1000 words each

Language: English

Characters: Barbara "Barb" Holland, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

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Summary:

Steve moves on from everything that happened that week, and Nancy doesn't.

Canon-compliant

1. Steve

Author's Note:

These are more or less my thoughts on how Steve and Nancy are feeling after Season 1 ends. I was going to do one about Jonathan, too, but it turned out to be a lot harder than I thought to get his POV.

Everything and nothing had changed since that bizarre week. On the one hand, he still went to school, to baseball practice, still went on dates with Nancy and partied with his friends. Sometimes, everything would seem so normal that he was able to forget for days at a time that anything strange had ever happened, that it must have been a dream, because nothing that exciting could ever have happened in Hawkins. *Nothing* ever happened in Hawkins. And he preferred it that way.

Most of the time he was able to forget that, for a brief moment, he had stood shoulder to shoulder with his girlfriend and Byers and fought a monster. *Demogorgon*, they both called it, and he wondered where they got that name from, because surely that *thing* didn't, couldn't, have a name, but they both said it like it was a fact. They had told him the whole story, at different times, sounding more like confessions than anything. Nancy had told him how she had gone into that other place (*The Upside Down*) when she was looking for the monster, and Byers, looking down at his feet, had told him how he had pulled her back out of there, as if it were something embarrassing instead of heroic. They told him about how they had made a plan to kill it, how they had figured out that it was attracted to blood, how they had stood in that house, under hundreds of Christmas lights and sliced open their hands to lure an interdimensional being into their trap, about Eleven and Will and men in white vans.

Nancy had nightmares of it, he knew, only because he had overheard her talking to Byers about them one day when they were in the darkroom, and he admitted that he had them, too. Steve didn't. For

the most part he had managed to put that *thing* out of his mind. Unlike the other two, he hadn't had the time to prepare for seeing it, hadn't known what was going to happen that night he went to apologize, and everything went down so quickly once he was there that it was almost a blur in his mind. It had been *them* who had lost someone, *them* who figured out when things weren't right, *them* who had made a plan to trap and kill something they couldn't understand. It had been *them*, together, who had risked everything for a chance that they might be able to avenge the people they loved. He had just happened to show up at the right time to see them. Nancy with her hand wrapped in gauze, Byers standing in his house with blood pooled on the carpet around him. Nancy, pointing a gun at his head and telling him he had to leave, *now*.

And that was what he remembered most, after the fear and adrenaline had worn off. Nancy, her steady hand, and the unnervingly calm look in her eye as she told him to get out. That was what had changed most. He'd known Nancy had a crush on him for a long time, that there had been months of her 'accidentally' bumping into him, her laughing at his jokes, showing up at his games in pretty new dresses. But then Barb vanished, and Nancy had become someone else. Someone who fought monsters, who didn't care if anyone thought she was crazy (and people did, she was buying bear traps and kerosene, for god's sake), who had decided that Jonathan Byers, the weirdo who had taken pictures of their party, *her*, without their knowledge, was the person she was going to make her last stand with.

He knew it was a stupid thing to think about. Nancy worried about other, darker worlds, about children being snatched up in the night, about her friend who had died alone and afraid when they were upstairs hooking up. He worried over the fact that he wasn't the person she trusted most, wasn't the person she shared her fears and nightmares with, wasn't the person she prepared to face evil with. It was stupid, even she had told him that, in so many words ("You came back for us, Steve, and that is what matters. You saved us." Her tone was final, and he never brought it up again), but her reassurances sound hollow to him. All he wanted was for things to go back to the way they were before, when they had walked down the halls of Hawkins High without a care in the world except how they would

sneak around their parents to see each other.

But she didn't want things to go back to normal. The new Nancy huddled in the basement of her house with Byers and her brother's friends, talking about those other worlds that existed, wondering if there were more monsters out there, if there was a way to kill them if they came back. The new Nancy spent her weekends sorting files at the police station and whispering to Hopper about what else they could do. The new Nancy wanted to hang out with Byers, and she wanted Steve to do it with her, so he spent more Friday nights than he could count sitting in the newly-cleaned and hole-less house on the edge of town, watching Nancy talk and Byers nod along. Listened to conversations about *alternate dimensions* and *portals* and *rips in space-time*, about speculation that if Eleven had been able to open the gate from *here*, something in one of the other worlds might be able to open a gate from *there*. The new Nancy had a loaded pistol in a shoebox and snuck out to the woods to shoot at beer cans. She had a pile of books about apex predators and astrophysics that were dog-eared and covered in notes.

Nancy From Before was gone, and Steve was the only thing that had stayed the same, a vestigial remain, still part of the body, but useless.

2. Chapter 2

It was amazing how much one short week could change everything.

Looking back, it was hard for her to even recognize the girl she had been before Will went missing. Before Barb. Before Eleven and Mike and Jonathan and Hopper and Joyce. Before the Demogorgon. Before the Upside Down.

‘Before’ her biggest concerns had been chemistry tests and trying to get Steve Harrington to notice her. Now, when she lay awake at night in her frilly room, she worried about wormholes, about gates opening and terrible things crawling out. She worried about Mike, the way his smile never seemed to reach his eyes since El vanished. She worried about Will, because she had only been in the Upside Down briefly, but he had been there for *days*, and if she had nightmares about it, what must he be going through? She worried about Barb, who died alone and afraid while Nancy was too busy focusing on Steve to wonder where her friend was. She worried that the terrible things they had been through would happen again. She worried that they wouldn’t.

And that was something she couldn’t explain. Not to her brother, or to Will, or to Steve. She would give anything to bring Barb back, to save Eleven, to keep Will from ever having gone through that living nightmare. But she *liked* who she had become in those few days. A girl who tracked down a monster, practiced shooting in the woods, bought bear traps and spikes and gasoline and dared the store clerk to make something of it. Being in the Byers’ house, waiting for the Demogorgon, she had been free of the fear that she would ever end up like her mother. Someone boring. Someone who *settled*. Because how could she be, when she was standing shoulder to shoulder with Jonathan, ready to avenge the people they loved?

She was different now. Before, she had spent so much of her time caring about what other people thought, what she looked like, if people would like her. She spent hours in her room with Barb, trying on different outfits, trying to figure out what would make Steve notice her. But what was the point of that, when there were men in white vans who could come and try to rip her family apart? When

there were little girls who could move things with their minds? When there were other dimensions that could open up without warning and unleash demons on unsuspecting people?

And so she hung out with Jonathan Byers at school, made him sit with them at lunch, sat on the floor of the darkroom and watched him develop his photos- and ignored Carol and Tommy's snide remarks. She got a job down at the police station so that she could talk to Hopper, mine him for the information he was somehow acquiring. She hung out in the basement with her brother and his friends, hugged Mike close to her every chance she got and ignored her parent's bemusement. She dressed up as an Elf, just like she had done years ago, for another of the boys Dungeons and Dragons campaigns, and had laughed until she thought she would crack a rib when Jonathan showed up, red-faced and dressed as a dwarf. She wore stripped sweaters and her corduroy jacket and her hair in a ponytail and didn't mind how she looked.

She snuck out on the nights she had nightmares and went over to the Byers' and didn't care what anyone said about it, because she needed someone to talk to. And sometimes it seemed like Jonathan was the only person in the world who really understood. He hadn't treated her like she was crazy when she thought some monster might have taken Barb, didn't try to talk her out of searching for it, didn't think it was crazy to lure it away from his mom and Hopper, didn't abandon her when she found herself in the Upside Down. Even though Will had come back, Jonathan knew what it was like to lose someone without explanation. Jonathan didn't treat her like she was some delicate little thing that might crack, he had seen through her, seen the steel-boned force of nature she could be, and accepted her for it.

Sometimes she would sneak in through his window with her piles of books, and they would sit on his bed and try to make some sort of sense of the things they had seen. Why had the bullets not killed the Demogorgon? ("Bears can take bullets and not die, depending on where they are hit") If they were Right Side up and she and Will had been Upside Down, was there a Sideways? If the Upside Down was the worst of all possible worlds, might there be one out there that was better? Could a gate be opened from the other side? And

sometimes they would lay back, staring at the ceiling, and talk about other things in hushed tones. What happened to Eleven? Is Will ok? Are the people who caused this mess in the first place still out there, somewhere, continuing their experiments? They talked until there was nothing else to say, until her mind was spinning, and they would fall asleep with the books all around them and The Clash playing softly in the background. It was the best sleep she got, now, and she wondered if that was true for Jonathan too.

Steve liked to talk about the future- about college and sports and moving somewhere nice, and she would smile and nod at the things he said, knowing that he wanted her to be around for those plans, wanted it to be *their* future, together. But she also knew it wouldn't be, deep down, that it couldn't be. Her future was with her brother and his friends, with Hopper and Joyce, with the possibility of more monsters to fight- more people to save. With a gun in one hand and Jonathan by her side.

Author's Note:

Comments and criticism are most welcome! Thanks for reading and I'll try to have Part Two: Nancy up soon!